

## The Digital Child and Adolescent Act bans paid loot boxes in video games played by minors in Brazil

### What this research is about

Loot boxes are items that can be bought in video games and provide random rewards. They share key features with gambling, like chance-based outcomes. This has raised concerns about the potential harms linked to loot boxes, especially among children and adolescents. Brazil is one of the world's largest gaming markets, and national data indicate that 78% of Internet users aged 9 to 17 play online games.

In September 2025, Brazil introduced the Digital Child and Adolescent Act. This law bans paid loot boxes in games that are designed for or likely to be played by minors. In this commentary, the authors described the policy and its public health framework.

### What the researchers did

The authors reviewed the Digital Child and Adolescent Act implemented in Brazil in September 2025. They described how the law defines loot boxes, outlined the public health framework and the sanctions it establishes, and compared Brazil's regulatory approach to those in other countries. The authors then summarized past research evidence on the harms linked to loot boxes among children and adolescents to highlight the need for regulations around these purchases. Finally, the authors considered how the law might work in practice and its implications.

### What the researchers found

The Digital Child and Adolescent Act represents an important shift in how loot boxes are regulated. Instead of focusing on whether loot boxes meet the legal definition of gambling, the law is grounded in a public health and child-rights framework that

### What you need to know

In this commentary, the authors reviewed the Digital Child and Adolescent Act that was implemented in Brazil in September 2025. This law bans paid loot boxes in games that are designed for or likely to be played by minors.

The law targets harmful design features that underlie gambling and loot boxes (e.g., randomness and uncertain outcomes), instead of focusing on whether loot boxes meet the legal definition of gambling. It takes a public health and child-rights approach that prioritizes harm prevention. The law is enforced through administrative sanctions, including fines of up to 10% of a company's revenue and suspension of services. It also restricts personalized advertising and algorithmic recommendation systems directed at minors. The law is timely given that adolescents are especially vulnerable to the potential harms of loot boxes. Brazil is the first major gaming market to explicitly ban paid randomized rewards for minors.

The Act provides a real-world experiment to evaluate whether restricting access to loot boxes reduces harm among youth. It is also an opportunity to see how the gaming industry adapts to the law. Findings can inform policy and regulations in Brazil, and in other countries.

prioritizes reducing youth's exposure to potentially harmful design features. In this way, it takes a broader approach by targeting products that include the same underlying features known to drive harmful gambling participation. Loot boxes are therefore included in this

law because they involve randomized rewards with uncertain outcomes, which are recognized as design features that increase the risk for harm.

Some countries, like Belgium and the Netherlands, have defined loot boxes as gambling. This has led some gaming companies to disable loot boxes in these countries. Other countries like the United Kingdom, Germany, and China require game companies to provide age ratings or disclose the presence of loot boxes. Brazil is the first major gaming market to take an approach that prioritizes harm prevention by banning paid randomized rewards for minors.

The Digital Child and Adolescent Act is a timely intervention. There is a growing body of research that indicates paid loot boxes are linked to problem gambling, impulsive tendency, mental distress, and financial harm among minors. Adolescents are especially vulnerable because of their developmental stages and social pressures. This may be combined with minimal parental supervision of digital spending.

The Digital Child and Adolescent Act has important implications. It can act as a real-world experiment to evaluate whether restricting access to loot boxes actually reduces harm among youth. At the same time, it provides an opportunity to see how the gaming industry adapts to the law. For example, gaming companies may find other ways to monetize their games, like battle passes, wherein rewards are fixed rather than random. Findings from Brazil can also inform policy and regulations in other countries.

How well the law works will depend on enforcement and whether gaming companies comply. Compliance may be more achievable among major companies, compared to the mobile gaming market, where small developers operate independently. Monitoring will also be needed for unequal impacts across Brazilian regions and income groups, given wide disparities in digital access and spending capacity.

### How you can use this research

This commentary could be of interest to policy makers and regulators of the gaming industry, as well as to researchers, clinicians, educators, and parents concerned with gaming and gambling harms among young people. Findings from Brazil may be particularly relevant to other low- and middle-income countries.

### About the researchers

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